



# AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WILDLIFE VETERINARIANS

SUMMER 2004

## AAWV FOUNDING PRESIDENT COMMENTS ON HOW FAR WE'VE COME

In 1979 Dr. Al Franzmann published a letter to the editor in JAVMA calling on wildlife veterinarians to gather in Seattle in conjunction with the AVMA's annual meeting to discuss the potential for organizing wildlife veterinarians. Out of that effort the AAWV was born and Al became the first President. At the time Dr. Franzmann was director of the Kenai Moose Research Center near Soldatna, Alaska.

Al, an avid outdoorsman, had spent 15 years in large and mixed animal practice in Ohio before deciding to attend graduate school at the University of Idaho and pursue a PhD. He had foreseen the need for veterinarians trained in wildlife management and after graduating in the mid 1970s went to work for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Although not classified as a veterinarian, Dr. Franzmann provided a wide range of veterinary services on an equally wide range of species.

Recently Dr. Franzmann was inducted into the University of Idaho Hall of Fame "for leadership and contributions in the field of wildlife veterinary research." In a letter dated May 20, 2004 Al wrote, "How far we have come in 25 years. Remember when the term wildlife veterinarian was unknown and when we had to describe our

professional involvement to the AVMA as 'miscellaneous'? It seems significant the award came from the College of Natural Resources."

Al spent 17 years with ADFG followed by a couple of years helping with post *Exxon Valdez* marine mammal research and other activities. He was then appointed by the governor of Alaska to the Alaska Game and Fish Commission and served in that oversight capacity for 6 years. In 1996 he was given the WDA's Emeritus award at the Fairbanks meeting and in 1997 he co-authored "Ecology and Management of the North American Moose" which was awarded the Wildlife Society's book publication award in 1998. This and his other achievements resulted in recognition by the Northwest Section of TWS giving Al the Einarrson award for being their outstanding professional in 1999.

Dr. Franzmann's recent letter also comments "Remember how I was chastised by some veterinarians for accepting employment as a game biologist? Remember when our goal was to have wildlife veterinarians in every state and we had only 3? I am pleased that we have closed the gap and I think whichever way AAWV decides to go on affiliations, the status of wildlife veterinarians will remain strong and grow stronger."

## President's Message

"You can't always get what you want, you can't always get what you want, you can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes you just might get what you need." *The Rolling Stones*

In this newsletter on page 3 you will find a short piece about Colin Gillin's new wildlife veterinary job working with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. I personally take great pleasure in this because of childhood memories of summers in southern Oregon along the Rogue River, because of ramblings across Oregon for several decades, because Oregon is still tremendous wildlife country, and because for years I taught courses on wildlife capture to ODFW and know how many fine biologists they have, how open and eager they are for veterinary input. So it is really great to see Oregon join the ranks of those States with a wildlife veterinarian working for their resources agency. As I jokingly told Colin, he will probably be given a 7 year old surveyed pickup truck, some Army surplus medical supplies and used lab equipment, and cardboard storage boxes. That's what many of us started with. But, a number of wildlife vets plowed the ground that Colin

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now finds himself planted in. Jack Mortenson and Mike Dunbar are both in Oregon working for USDA and USGS respectively, and Dick Stroud and Rhoda Ralston working for USFWS. So Colin is not alone, there are other wildlife vets in Oregon and he has the Corvallis veterinary faculty to entice into helping him.

Similar situations exist in other States. Kim Beckman now has the Alaska Game and Fish veterinary job, but John Blake at University of Alaska Fairbanks, Pam Toumi at the Seward Sea Life Center, and Kathy Burek in private pathology practice in Anchorage are deeply involved with and committed to wildlife. They also have the wisdom and experience of Al Franzmann (see story this issue), Bill Taylor and others to draw on if needed.

Briggs Hall has western Washington and Kristin Mansfield has eastern Washington and they each have additional veterinary resources at Washington State University - College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Washington and Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, and several practitioners like Randy Hein that have provided help to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for many years (as Jim Foster at Woodland Park Zoo did in the 1970-80's).

Michigan now has two vets, Steve Schmitt and Dan O'Brien and a total staff of 12 working on wildlife health issues. Idaho now has two wildlife vets, Mark Drew and Phil Mamer and they have the Caldwell facilities. Wyoming has two vets (Terry Kreeger and Walt Cook) and at least two pathologists (Todd Cornish and Beth Williams). Long suffering Julie Langenburg in Wisconsin finally gets a number two vet this month. And thanks

to CWD (the wildlife veterinary full employment act) Mike Miller now has veterinary and laboratory help. Because USDA "program" diseases are present in all of these States there are USDA resources and veterinarians to work with. In each of these States a core of wildlife health professionals exists, and along with colleagues in from public health, at universities and colleges, with NGO's and non-profits, and in Federal agencies like USGS and NPS this allows for the formation of informal cooperative wildlife health groups.

I started working for California Fish and Game (CDFG) in 1977 as the first staff veterinarian, now CDFG has 4 full time vets, Ben Gonzales and Pam Swift at the Wildlife Investigations Lab, Joe Maret at the Fisheries Disease Lab, and myself at the Marine Wildlife Lab (and we are very likely hiring Melissa Miller as our pathologist next month - making us the first State to 5 wildlife vets!!). CDFG also provides the funding and many of the job priorities for 3 to 4 additional veterinarians at University of California, Davis - Wildlife Health Center. We have access to almost 50 faculty with wildlife health interests or research programs through the U.C. Davis (where 20 years ago Walter Boyce was considered an odd ball because he focused on wildlife as a new faculty member), and access to several dozen colleagues at zoos, aquaria and wild animal parks in San Diego, Escondido, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Monterey, San Francisco and Sacramento, as well as others in non-profit wildlife rehabilitation and research centers.

The bottom line is that there has been an incredible and perhaps unrecognized growth in the veterinary expertise and resources appli-

able to wildlife health and welfare issues over the last 20-25 years. So, I get a little impatient when aspiring wildlife veterinarians complain there aren't the jobs out there for them. The jobs are out there for those who have the fire in their belly to find them. The resources are out there if you just look and if you try and see the "win-win" in it for someone else. Not all of the resources you'll need are ever going to be found in State resource agency budgets. The same is true of Federal agencies or universities. Like many of the newer successful corporations the appropriate business model is one of lateral growth, cooperation and collaboration, not vertical growth and a command structure. It is up to each of us, as wildlife veterinarians, to seek out, and where mutually beneficial to exploit the resources wherever you find them, to build a collaborative group or your own state or regional cooperative. Sometimes you just need to bloom where you are planted.

Many of your colleagues will not have "wildlife veterinarian" in their title. For half of my 27 year career I was not classed as a veterinarian, let alone a wildlife veterinarian, but that didn't change what I did or its value to conservation. I hope we all recognize that it is our interests, the work of our hearts and minds, that bind us together, not a job title or an even an employer. We are not alone, unless we choose to be.

It is easy to identify what you want, what you don't have and what you think you need. It is easy to be unhappy. I have been deeply dissatisfied and anxious at times about my job and my work, but when I have found patience, have persisted and involved others I have also found great satisfaction and a

sense of accomplishment in seeing wildlife veterinary needs filled. Sometimes that has meant seeing others finish what I started, doing what I once enjoyed. Sometimes that has meant giving resources to younger colleagues and having the grace to get out of their way, or even promoting ex-graduate students above me. Frequently it has meant taking a subordinate role in collaboration. I think Ronald Reagan is credited with saying "Great things can be accomplished if you don't worry too much about who gets the credit."

As I look back I can see that I didn't always get what I wanted (thank goodness!!), but I almost always have gotten what was needed to accomplish good things for wildlife.

On another issue I would like to direct your attention to the draft letter to Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman (in this issue) which voices support for the National Veterinary Services Act and for inclusion of wildlife veterinarians in it. Please use this as a template and send her a letter as soon as possible. Now is the time you can influence these decisions. This fall we will have the opportunity to lobby congress people to provide the appropriations that would be required to implement this act if wildlife veterinarians are part of it. Paul Barrows will be heading up that effort if it becomes appropriate.

"Whither thou goest, I go."

I decided it would be O.K. to use this quote from the Bible, book of Ruth, when I heard the Mushu character (Eddie Murphy) in the Mulan II cartoon movie use it. How can anything Eddie Murphy says seem too pompous? AAWV is at a crossroads. We are now at a place where we will decide by ballot what our future primary affiliations

will be. This is the most important decision AAWV has faced since it was founded in 1979. PLEASE VOTE.

I will not urge you to vote for one option or the other option. That is your decision. Since taking the office of President of AAWV I have tried to make sure that both paths toward the future that our younger leaders have identified are allowed equal time. I am willing to lead the organization in whichever direction you choose. Whether we take advantage of the historic opportunity to combine our strengths with our colleagues who work more on captive wildlife, or whether we restructure AAWV into a stronger and more stable solitary organization, we need to make some significant changes in our Constitution and Bylaws (which have not been revised to reflect a number of changes voted in by the membership, dues changes, the availability of electronic communications to discuss and decide issues, and other operational realities). Ballots should be in your hands by July 1, 2004 and must be postmarked by the date of our annual meeting September 2, 2004. Please note that the annual meeting will be at noon September 2nd at the San Diego Airport Sheraton in conjunction with the AAWV/AAZV/WDA joint meetings.

Whichever way the balloting goes we have a lot of work to do to make AAWV a more functional organization. But, "Whither thou goest, I go". I will serve you to the best of my ability for the remaining portion of my term as your President. I hope our other officers and leaders, and all of our members, will show that same loyalty and will support AAWV in which ever path of affiliation the membership chooses.

## Oregon DFW hires wildlife veterinarian Colin Gillin

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife recently hired a wildlife veterinarian. Colin Gillin, a faculty member of Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine has been offered the position and will begin the job this summer. Prior to his position at Tufts, Colin worked for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, first as a grizzly bear biologist, later moving up to become the Biological Services branch supervisor.

While working for ODFW, Colin will use his veterinary expertise to provide services and training for wildlife capture, handling, relocation, and sample collection for the department's field personnel. Also, he will coordinate ODFW response and work with other agencies and neighboring states to address current disease issues such as deer hair loss syndrome, adenovirus hemorrhagic disease, and CWD among others. He also will be working with agency planners to integrate wildlife health into Oregon's Comprehensive Wildlife Plan and will direct the formulation of policy, procedures and regulations to control the intrastate movement of wildlife species to help prevent the introduction of wildlife diseases not native to Oregon. The AAWV wishes him well.

## AAWV-SPONSORED WORKSHOPS FOR JOINT AAWV/AAZV/WDA MEETING

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The joint meeting of the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians, and the Wildlife Disease Association in San Diego, CA is rapidly approaching (Aug. 28–Sept. 3). The AAWV is sponsoring three workshops, two independent sessions and the AAWV business

meeting will be held at 12 noon on September 2. In conjunction with AAZV and WDA, the AAWV has obtained \$5000 from USDA to support participation of students and attendees from developing nations at the meeting.

**NOTE: Registrant prices have been lowered by \$30.**

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### WORKSHOPS

So You Want to be a Wildlife Veterinarian II?—Aug. 29 morning

Instructors: Drs. Billy Karesh, Thierry Work, Dave Jessup. limit: 60 people

Course cost \$90 per registrant, students \$70. Course will accept up to 50% student registrants.

Wildlife veterinarians are called upon to work on a variety of biomedical problems in a variety of free-ranging species under a wide variety of circumstances. This workshop will be in a lecture/discussion format with three prominent wildlife veterinarians and will provide examples of where and how veterinary medical assistance is provided in three general areas: 1) capture and anesthesia to facilitate biological/ecological studies, 2) health studies of free-living wildlife that have interactions with humans or livestock and 3) dieoffs, disease diagnosis and management programs. The basic legal/jurisdictional issues, handling of controlled substances, and import/export of samples will be discussed. Examples of wildlife veterinary activities and projects in the Pacific islands, Africa, and North America will be used to illustrate what wildlife veterinarians do and how they do it. There will be organized presentations, several short question and answer sessions and handout materials provided.

Capture and Immobilization of Free-ranging Wildlife—Aug. 29 full day

Instructors: Drs. John Arnemo, Dave Hunter, Mike Kock, Bill Lance, Kathy Quigley. limit: 40 people

Course costs \$210 per registrant, students \$60. Course will accept up to 25% students.

This workshop will be offered in a lecture/question and answer format with some opportunity to handle and test equipment, but will not involve the handling of live animals. The course will present background materials and consideration as well as overview of the pharmacology of some of the newer and more important drugs and drug combinations used on free-ranging wildlife. Emphasis will be on what it takes to develop and carry out field immobilization and capture projects and the way they contribute to species conservation. Examples will be drawn from the instructors' experiences in Siberia, Europe, Africa and North America.

This course is sponsored by Wildlife Pharmaceuticals Inc. A text that retails for \$60 (Handbook of Wildlife Chemical Immobilization, Kreeger, Arnemo and Raath) will be provided. Lunch and drinks will be provided.

Marine Mammal Pathology—Aug. 29 afternoon

Instructors: Drs. Judy St. Ledger and Melissa Miller limit: 25 people

Course costs \$120 per registrant, students \$85. Course will accept up to 25% student registrants.

The postmortem examination of stranded marine mammals is a critical component of determining what kinds of organisms and human activities are detrimental to marine mammals and marine ecosystem health. This wet-lab will provide students with the opportunity to participate in marine mammal postmortem examinations and will provide basic information on marine mammal pathology. Emphasis will be on conducting gross postmortem examinations on sea otters, pinnipeds and cetaceans. Limited handout materials will be provided.

Course will be conducted at a location in San Diego County remote from the hotel and transportation will be provided as will snacks and drinks. Participants should be in good health and dressed to work outdoors on dead animals.

AAWV Independent Sessions—Sep. 2 afternoon

Wildlife/Livestock disease interface

In Situ Conservation: what works and what doesn't

AAWV Business Meeting – 12 noon

## AAWV RECOMMENDS WILDLIFE VETERINARIANS BE INCLUDED IN NVMSA

The National Veterinary Medical Service Act is intended to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a loan repayment program to encourage the provision of veterinary services in shortage and emergency situations. The AAWV recently sent a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, asking her to support the NVMSA and to include wildlife medicine as an area of veterinary practice that has a shortage of veterinarians. The act would help to

re-pay approved school loans for each year of service. If wildlife veterinarians are included in the Act, it would help to recruit and retain bright veterinarians into the field. We encourage AAWV members to write letters to the Secretary Veneman to show your support. A sample letter is shown below and text in MS Word may be downloaded from the AAWV website ([www.aawv.net](http://www.aawv.net)).

Your name  
Address  
Number and e-mail

The Honorable Ann M. Veneman  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U. S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman:

I am writing to ask you to provide funding for the National Veterinary Medical Services Act in your budget for FY06. Funding at a level of \$20 million per year for a total of \$60 million would allow the implementation of this important Act over FY's 06, 07 and 08. I also request that you support the inclusion of veterinarians working on wildlife health issues that are important to livestock and public health, and to our nations biosecurity in this program.

H.R. 1367, the National Veterinary Medical Services Act (NVMSA) was passed unanimously in both the House and the Senate this past fall. It was signed into law (P.L. 108-161) on December 6, 2003. NVMSA authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a loan repayment program for veterinarians in exchange for the provision of veterinary services in shortage and emergency situations.

NVMSA will help correct the serious veterinary shortage situations that exist in many areas of government service and private practice due to the debt burden facing many veterinary graduates.

Educational debt is a problem for nearly all veterinary students. 87.6% graduate with debt. Moreover, the disparity between available salaries and school-related debt is worsening for new graduates. In 2003, the mean starting salary for veterinary graduates was \$41,602 with the mean loan debt of \$76,588. In comparison to other health professionals, veterinarians must spend a considerably higher percentage of their monthly income on student loan payments. These high loan repayment obligations currently run \$800-\$900 per month—nearly one-third of their monthly salaries. Between 2002 and 2003, the new veterinary graduate's debt load rose by 5.3% while their average starting salary rose only 3.1%

This disparity between salary and debt precludes recent veterinary graduates from accepting lower-paying positions in rural agricultural, wildlife conservation and management, inner-city, and governmental areas—areas where they are needed for biosecurity, food safety, disease control, and animal health management. I want to stress that wildlife veterinarians are involved in all of these professional activities and urge you to assure that wildlife veterinarians are included in NVSA. Members of our profession provide necessary disease surveillance and are trained to identify and contain potential outbreaks of both human and animal infections. As you know, the list of possible diseases that bioterrorists could employ against our nation such as anthrax, plague, tularemia and botulism are wild animal diseases. Also, many of the most troublesome emerging and USDA program diseases like virulent avian influenza, Newcastle disease, TB, brucellosis and West Nile virus have a nexus at the wildlife/livestock/human health interface. This new law is a win-win solution for new veterinary graduates, areas in need of veterinary health care, and our nation's biosecurity as a whole.

*[At this point you could place a FEW sentences to personalize the letter, perhaps about why NVMSA is important to you, why wildlife veterinary medicine is important to the nations public health, agriculture and biosecurity ]*

As practitioners of this science/art, when we take the Veterinary Oath, we solemnly swear to use our scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society. Funding of NVMSA will allow us to enter those areas of both government and public practice, such as wildlife medicine, which are now facing serious shortages of veterinarians. In the entire country presently there are only approximately 100 veterinarians serving in State agencies, Federal agencies and at Universities whose full time focus is the health of wildlife. Students are the future of veterinary medicine, but the burden of debt will continue to constrain them from contributing to improving the health of livestock, wildlife and human beings unless some relief is forthcoming.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully,

Your name (and degrees)  
Your address, university, employer (if that's O.K.) or other affiliation

## Numbers of deformed beaks in Alaskan birds on the rise

Source: *Nature News* (edited)

A growing incidence of beak deformities among Alaska's birds is ruffling environmentalists' feathers. Puzzled experts suspect that pollution may be behind the phenomenon, though they admit that the cause is still unknown.

Outsized curved beaks up to three

times their usual size have been spotted in some 30 species of bird so far. In many cases, the beak is so long that the bird is unable to feed or

preen effectively, and ultimately dies. Isolated cases of beak deformation have been seen in other places before, but not in such startling numbers, experts say.

The latest sightings bring the total number of Alaskan cases to around 1,800 since the first deformities were spotted in black-capped chickadees near Anchorage during the 1990s. Crows in southeastern Alaska are the latest to fall victim, says Colleen Handel of the U.S. Geological Survey's Alaska Science Center in Anchorage, who has been tracking the outbreak.

There is concern that cases are increasing and the distribution is spreading geographically, but no one yet knows what is responsible for the birds'

blighted beaks. Handel and her colleagues have few leads to work on—the large number of different birds affected rules out a species-specific cause, and the team has found

no evidence of a disease.

## Moose die-off in Alaska

Source: *ProMed* (edited)

Alaska State wildlife officials are looking for answers after a nematode parasite apparently killed at least 2 moose, and maybe more, near Delta Junction. Biologists and veterinarians are investigating the deaths of 5 other moose in the area, one of which appears to have exhibited the same odd behavior as the 2 moose killed by the parasite. Those moose were seen stumbling around just hours before they died.

"We have not documented this type of worm causing disease or death in Alaskan moose in the past, but that may be because we haven't looked closely enough," wildlife veterinarian Kimberlee Beckmen with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game said in a press release issued late Thursday.

Wildlife officials are trying to figure out whether the parasite poses a danger to moose around the state. The biggest fear is that the parasite is meningeal worm, a parasite commonly found in white-tailed deer in the Lower 48 that has been known to infect moose and elk. While the worm is not fatal in deer, it can kill moose, caribou, reindeer, and other ruminants.

"If it were meningeal worm, that would be a disaster for Alaska moose populations," said Randy Zarnke, a retired state wildlife veterinarian who spent 23 years at Fish and Game in Fairbanks as a disease specialist. "When it gets in moose, it just tears them up." At the same time, Zarnke said it "would really be jumping to conclusions saying it is meningeal worm" without further tests to confirm it. Officials know the parasite is a roundworm and that it is transmitted to moose through larvae shed in moose feces that are picked up by snails and slugs, which are eaten by other moose as they browse. Once inside the animal, the parasite migrates into the central nervous system.

"It's way too premature to panic about what it is and what it might be," said fish and game public information officer Cathie Harms. "Somebody

called us and said they had a moose out in a hay field that was kind of stumbling around and being fairly lethargic," said Steve DuBois with ADF&G in Delta. "I told them to watch it a day or 2 and let us know how it turned out, and it died." Biologists retrieved the moose and a week later got another report of a moose in the same area displaying similar behavior. That moose laid down in a driveway and died, DuBois said. Both moose appeared to be in good physical condition, he said. The parasite was found in the brain of the 2nd moose and chances are the 1st moose to die was infected too, based on its behavior, said DuBois. Biologists have since located 5 more dead moose in Delta. One of those appears to have gone through the same kind of pre-death ritual of stumbling around, judging from tracks near the body, he said. Tissue samples from those 5 moose are still being analyzed.

## Pasteurella pneumonia in Idaho Big Horns resurfaces

Source: *ProMed* (edited)

A pneumonia-like disease that once raced through several Hells Canyon bighorn sheep herds is resurfacing, foiling efforts of wildlife managers to restore the sheep. A decade ago, as many as 300 sheep were killed by pneumonic pasteurellosis. It first swept through Hells Canyon bighorn sheep herds in 1995, killing sheep on the western side of the canyon from the Grand Ronde River to the Imnaha River. Now, herds that had no exposure to the 1995 outbreak are becoming sick.

Biologists from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife suspect domestic goats grazing near the rim of the canyon have infected the Big Canyon herd that roams just north of Pittsburg Landing on the Idaho side of the river.

Frances Cassirer, a wildlife biologist for the Idaho Department of Fish

**ALERT!**

Bud Anderson is investigating the cases of deformed beaks in raptors and is interested in hearing from people who have seen similar "long-billed" red-tailed hawks.

If you have information for Bud, please contact him at bud@frg.org



Photo: Bud Anderson

Bud Anderson, of The Falcon Research Group (Bow, WA), has found 33 adult red-tailed hawks, that have beak deformities like the one above.

and Game at Lewiston, directs efforts to restore the sheep to Hells Canyon. She and her partner, Vic Coggins, of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at Enterprise, worry this latest outbreak will spread to other healthy herds in Hells Canyon.

The biologists say circumstantial evidence points to the disease being transmitted by domestic goats that are used to fight noxious weeds on the canyon rim. A goat herd as large as 4000 has grazed on a private ranch on the benches above Big Canyon for 3 out of the past 4 years, and the goat's appearance coincides with drops in herd numbers.

The goat owner, Ray Holes of White Bird, said the biologist's accusation was made out of convenience. He knows his goats carry *Pasteurella*, the bacteria causing the illness, but said the goats and sheep have not had contact close enough to exchange diseases.

"It was an easy thing for them to point to [me]. There were goats and big-horns on the same side of the river and, by air miles, not very far apart. "It's an assumption that would make sense, but as far as we know there has never been any contact." He said herders and guard dogs deter wild animals. The animals must be close enough to touch noses or exchange mucus through sneezing and coughing to transfer the disease.

Cassirer and Coggins want to keep goats away from wild sheep herds in Hells Canyon and canyons of southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon. "I think most of the land management agencies are on board with that," Cassirer said. "But, obviously, not all the private landowners are. It would be nice to get the word out for people who are concerned about bighorn sheep to try different [weed control] methods."

Coggins proposes moving the goats away from the canyon's rim to remove them from the area where the sheep herd grazes. Holes said the demand for him to relocate is unfair. He said the sheep's propensity to roam would continue to push him further away, and he contends sheep would become ill even if his goats were moved.

## Hepatitis E virus transmitted wildlife to humans

Source: *ProMed (edited)*

In March 2003, 11 men were infected with hepatitis-E virus after eating wild boar meat at a barbecue party in Nagasaki, Japan. This is the first time it has been confirmed that more than 10 people had contracted hepatitis-E virus from the same source.

Doctors suspect the 11 men may have either eaten meat that had not been grilled thoroughly enough to kill the virus or used chopsticks that had touched raw meat. "Since hepatitis E virus is similar to hepatitis A virus, the virus is generally killed if sufficiently heated. Hepatitis A virus and hepatitis E virus are enteric viruses with similar routes of transmission and tissue tropism. They are not phylogenetically related, however: Hepatitis A virus is classified in the genus *Hepatovirus* of the family *Picornaviridae*, whereas Hepatitis E virus is more calicivirus-like but is now classified in the unassigned genus *Hepevirus*.

Hepatitis E virus (HEV) is globally distributed and is transmitted enterically as well as between humans and animals. In developing countries HEV is transmitted principally by the fecal-oral route, and water-borne epidemics are common. In industrialized countries zoonotic transmission may be more usual. Sporadic cases of hepatitis E have been reported in Japan in the past, and widespread infection of HEV has been reported among wild rats in different parts of the country. Zoonotic spread of HEV is indicated by the fact that human and swine isolates of HEV are closely similar in terms of nucleotide sequence and experimental cross-species transmission of swine HEV to a chimpanzee and of human HEV to swine have been demonstrated.

## The plague in NM and TX

Source: *ProMed (edited)*

The New Mexico Department of Health has confirmed plague infections in cats from two counties and the agency says several people exposed to the sick cats will be given antibiotics to prevent them from contracting the disease.

The Texas Department of Health confirmed today that *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium that causes plague, has been detected in wood rats found dead in a rural location near the border of Midland and Glasscock Counties in west Texas and in fleas from wild prairie dogs in Dallam County.

When sylvatic outbreaks occur in rodent populations, domestic cats can be infected by fleas on the rodents or by contact with infected rodent tissues as they ingest squirrels or other rodents. The incubation period in cats may be short, a day or 2, and marked by a fever up to 41.5°C and lymphadenopathy. Typical buboes often occur in the head and neck, which can be mistaken for cat fight abscesses. Dogs are considered to be less susceptible.



Plague is generally transmitted to people through infected fleas bites. The disease also can be transmitted by direct contact with infected animals including rodents, wildlife, and pets. Symptoms of bubonic plague in humans include fever, swollen lymph nodes, chills and sometimes headache, vomiting and diarrhea. Health officials urge people to use long-acting flea control products on their pets, remove food and shelter sources for rodents around homes, work sites and recreational areas, use safe insecticides to kill fleas around property, and to apply a DEET-containing repellent to exposed skin and clothing when in flea-inhabited areas, especially when camping or in other rodent-inhabited areas.

## Job-related mortality in wildlife workers

Wildlife veterinarians and biologists face a number of job-related hazards that are unique to the profession. A recent report in the *Wildlife Society Bulletin* (2003, 31(4):1015-1020) reviewed 91 documented job-related deaths from 1937 to 2000. Aviation accidents accounted for 66% (n=39) of the people killed while conducting wildlife research or management. Drowning, car and truck accidents and murder were other common causes of death. Wildlife veterinarians that fly, drive, and boat as part of their job should take note of these findings and should adhere to all prescribed safety practices to minimize risks inherent in these activities.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Jul 24–28* American Veterinary Medical Association's 141st Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: [www.avma.org/convention/default.asp](http://www.avma.org/convention/default.asp)
- Jul 30–Aug 2* Annual Meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology Center for Environmental Research and Conservation, Columbia University, New York, New York; <http://conbio.net/>
- Aug 28–Sep 3* Joint meeting of the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians, and the Wildlife Disease Association, San Diego, California; <http://137.227.245.195/>
- Sep 18–22* The Wildlife Society's 11th Annual Conference, Calgary, Alberta, Canada; [www.wildlife.org/](http://www.wildlife.org/)
- Nov 6–7* The 13th Annual Mid-Western Exotic Animal Medicine Conference, Manhattan, KS; For more information contact James Carpenter at Tel: (785) 532-5690; Fax: (785) 532-4309; e-mail: [carpentr@vet.k-state.edu](mailto:carpentr@vet.k-state.edu)



We encourage you to submit articles: letters to the editor about your perspectives on the merger or other items, articles for the wildlife disease news, helpful hints from the field, photos (contact design editor for specifics), whatever makes you passionate about being a wildlife vet!

### AAWV NEWSLETTER

IS PUBLISHED BY THE  
**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
WILDLIFE VETERINARIANS**

Founded in 1979, the AAWV is a national, non-profit organization of veterinarians interested in all aspects of wildlife health.

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**AMERICAN  
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